



Admissions Policy

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a 'TELLING' school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

Responsibility: Robin Wilson (Head of Centre)

Reviewed: 10 November 2017

Next Review: 10 November 2019



1 Preamble

Woodlands School is a Shropshire Local Authority (LA) Special School based in the Woodlands Centre catering for pupils aged eleven to sixteen all of whom are supported by an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) due to their complex Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND), specifically within the area of Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH). The Woodlands Centre also has two separate provisions, one based in Oswestry called the Acorns Oswestry, and the other based in Bishop's Castle, named Acorns Bishop's Castle. These primary units cater specifically for KS2 pupils with SEMH EHCPs in Shropshire. Some pupils with SEMH will also have associated or additional SEND which can be accommodated provided SEMH is the primary presenting need.

Reference within this policy to Woodlands Centre refers to pupils at Woodlands School and the Acorns units where processes are common, otherwise specific reference will be made to Woodlands School or the Acorns units.

In Woodlands School children are admitted from year seven, up to a maximum of eight in each year group. Each group is usually taught by one teacher and one teaching assistant. The high staff to pupil ratio within classrooms is recognition that pupils coming to Woodlands School have a range of learning, social, emotional and mental health difficulties which require a significantly higher level of support. The Acorns units can accommodate small groups of pupils in Years 5 and 6, and are staffed by highly experienced SEMH practitioners. Based on any progress these pupils make with their SEMH within the Acorns units, decisions will be made regarding secondary transfer which would lead to admission to Woodlands School in Year 7, a mainstream school, or in rare cases alternative provision.

In the Woodlands Centre pupils follow the national curriculum. It is anticipated they make progress at least in line with national expectations, making accelerated progress to 'catch up' if they come to us behind in their progress, as a vast majority of pupils do. **As an admissions requirement therefore all pupils must be able to follow an academic curriculum leading to examinations taught in small groups of up to 8 pupils. Children whose SEND prevents this are not suited to admission to the Woodlands Centre.**

All decisions made to place pupils will have passed through the Specialist Placement Panel process. This panel meets fortnightly and includes representatives from the LA Inclusion Services, the LA SEND team, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS), Education Psychology Service (EPS), and specialist providers (Woodlands, Severndale, and The Medical Behaviour Support Service (TMBSS)).



2 Aim

Ensure that criteria and arrangements for admission to the Woodlands Centre are clear and efficiently administered in support of our identified cohort and the LA's Local SEND Offer.

3 Objectives

- make the admissions criteria and process as clear as possible to a variety of partners, stakeholders and a wider audience, especially:
 - The LA, as part of the Local Offer and LA SEND admissions panel and EHCP processes;
 - Parents and carers;
 - Shropshire schools and other schools which may potentially wish to seek placement;
 - Partner agencies working in support of SEND pupils
- Ensure that pupils are appropriately admitted in a timely and supportive fashion;
- Support as positive a transition to Woodlands as possible, ensuring for example that new parents, carers and pupils:
 - understand and share as much as possible the ethos of the school;
 - are clear about expectations;
 - feel positive about their new start; and,
 - can understand the contribution Woodlands can make in terms of the EHCP during secondary education and to outcomes and aspirations;
- Enable newly admitted pupils to flourish and progress as soon as possible.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The LA:

- manages the pre-admission process to the point of agreeing or otherwise to the Specialist Placement Panel discussion regarding appropriate provision for a SEMH pupil
 - following referral by mainstream or out of county school which must clearly provide evidence of an inability to meet need despite passing through several cycles of 'plan, do, review' against provision detailed in the EHCP;
 - after specialist advice has been sought and implemented by the existing provision AND the pupil has an EHCP;
 - following assessment from TMBSS leading to a judgement that the pupil requires an EHCP and should attend Woodlands once this has been identified at the appropriate point within the EHCP process; or
 - if they are undergoing statutory assessment and such discussion will help to match proposed provision to needs, ensuring placement decisions are agreed and finalised without unreasonable delays.
- produces draft EHCP for Specialist Placement Panel discussion;
- communicates with the family regarding decisions from panel, including the statutory formal consultation regarding place allocation;
- consults formally with the school allowing 15 calendar days for a response;
- provides all relevant information and paperwork to the school once identified for provision, including the EHCP;
- arranges transport for the identified start date.

4.2 Governors:



- have legal responsibility for overseeing the admissions process and policy and for considering/deciding the appropriateness of each proposed pupil placement;
- liaise with the Head of School and Head of Centre to exercise the above responsibilities;
- defer to the Head of Centre the day to day operation of the admissions process and policy;

4.3 The Head of Centre:

- has overall responsibility for the management of the admissions process and policy within school;
- liaises with the Head of School and with Governors to ensure the effective operation of the process and policy;

4.4 The Head of School:

- will manage all aspects of admissions to Woodlands School, including fortnightly attendance at Specialist Placement Panel;
- liaises with parents, carers, and agencies following a decision to place, making all necessary arrangements;
- arranges for an initial school visit where parents/carers/prospective pupils can:
 - become familiar with the school, its ethos and expectations;
 - share important information with school;
 - find out more about the school;
 - meet with key staff and other pupils;
- ensures that all school paperwork is given to the parents, and that the parents understand and have signed the 'parental contract' which also contains the schools commitments to the child and family regarding communication, progress, behaviour, bullying etc.;
- through discussion with colleagues allocates new admissions to the most appropriate teaching group;
- writes and sends acceptance letters to parents/carers, copied to the LA;

4.5 Parents/Carers:

- communicate openly and effectively with the school throughout the admissions process;
- visit the school with their child prior to admission;
- complete all forms necessary to facilitate admission;
- sign the 'parental contact' which outlines the schools expectations of parents/carers and includes commitments to positively support:
 - the school in their dialogue with their child, both initially and in the longer term;
 - their child's attendance and the schools attendance policy;
 - to let the school know if there are any contact number/address changes
 - the uniform policy; and
 - attend any meetings necessary.



5 Admission process

The LA will bring pupil names for discussion to the fortnightly Specialist Placement Panel to discuss, and support LA decision making with regard to, the most appropriate placement to support a child's SEND needs.

5.1 For children **without** an EHCP

- From the point at which a request for an EHCP needs assessment is agreed, the LA will work with the child's parents to identify the most appropriate school;
- The LA will introduce the draft plan with proposed resource allocation to the Specialist Placement Panel for discussion and advice; the LA makes the final decision with regard to naming provision
- Once Woodlands is then agreed by panel the LA formally consults with parents and with Woodlands (15 working days) before issuing the final plan

5.2 For pupils **with** an EHCP (includes pupils with an SEND Statement if 'unconverted')

- Parents of children with an EHCP and young people with such a plan, might seek a place at Woodlands Special School as an outcome of an EHCP needs assessment or following a review of an existing Statement or EHCP;
- In working with parents and young people to identify whether or not Woodlands would be an appropriate placement Shropshire LA will have regard to:
 - The suitability of the proposed placement in terms of age, ability, aptitude or SEND of the child or young person;
 - the efficient education of other children at Woodlands, and
 - the efficient use of resources (that the placement would not require unreasonable public expenditure
- It is important to note that when discussing 'suitability' and 'efficiency', the panel considers factors that may be significant barriers for certain pupils or their families. For example, admitting pupils:
 - in KS4 may not be the most efficient use of resources, as the school demonstrates more successful outcomes/progress for pupils who join as early as possible in KS3, and preferably during transition to secondary school in Year 7;
 - who already have a sibling or close relation, or a known protagonist/antagonist the family/school/LA deem as likely to undermine the successful/efficient education of their child, or of BOTH children. This is a common scenario in Woodlands admissions, and in most cases parents will be reassured by the school, but it is an issue that at times needs consideration. The LA do accept some families' preference to only admit one sibling, particularly when that sibling is being successful. This is supported by



the 2014 SEND Code of Practice which states: Support should be family centred and should consider the individual family's needs and the best ways to support them, (5.33);

- who may feel vulnerable or isolated for example by the presenting behaviour or gender of other pupils, most obviously female pupils with no opportunities to form friendships if there are no other female pupils in groups they could attend. In such cases the school will work closely with the LA to ensure acceptable arrangements are made in the exercising of the duty under legislation to prevent discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations, (6.9 SEND Code of Practice)
- Woodlands will admit the pupil taking note of any special arrangements discussed at the panel (for example to have a brief phased introduction if the pupil has been out of school for a significant amount of time)

5.3 For all pupils:

The school will:

- arrange for an initial school visit where parents/carers/prospective pupils can become familiar with the school, its ethos and expectations and where the school can find out more about the pupil and home can find out more about the school;
- ensure that all school paperwork is given to the parents, and that the parents understand and have signed the 'parental contract' which also contains the schools commitments to the child and family regarding communication, progress, behaviour, bullying etc.;
- through discussion with colleagues allocates new admissions to the most appropriate teaching group and make all possible reasonable adjustments and arrangements to support the pupil in fully accessing the facilities and curriculum and wider opportunities available to all pupils in the school. The school will ensure that this support extends to disabled pupils and those with medical conditions;
- write and send acceptance letters to parents/carers, copied to the LA;

5.4 Upon admission:

Once the child has been admitted the school endeavours to keep in close contact with parents/carers usually through the Pastoral Team, and it is possible that details of this have been considered in pre-admission planning for anxious pupils, parents, or those who have not attended school for a while for example.

As soon as the child starts school, the School Administrator requests records from the previous school, including the Unique Pupil Number and National Transfer Form.

Shortly after entry all teaching staff will informally assess the current attainment of the child to ensure we have a baseline from which we can measure progress. Assessment may include recording attainment in numeracy, reading and writing by our Special Educational Needs Coordinator if there is no up to date reliable evidence in the last year preceding admission. This means that when used along



with information in the EHCP (or Statement of Special Educational Needs up to 2017) we can provide pupils new to the school with work suited to their current attainment.

Shortly after admission a new pupil will be assigned a mentor, where possible one of their choosing, so that regular weekly discussion can take place and support be provided with regards to progress and any issues affecting learning. This mentor is the 'key worker' who will ensure there is regular contact with home, at least weekly. The mentor will set targets and issue rewards specifically attached to these, monitoring them and amending them when necessary to help achieve expected progress. In some cases the mentor will, with guidance of all staff, create an Individual Behaviour for Learning Plan in support of a pupil who needs specific identified support in order to progress. The mentor will then review this SMART plan regularly with staff.

6 Further information

For further information, including the schools contribution to the LAs Local SEND Offer please visit our website: www.woodlandscentre.org. Should you still have any questions answered or wish to have discussion, then please contact the school (01939 232372) and in the first instance discuss any queries with Robin Wilson, the Centre manager or Jules Taylor, Head of School.